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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship of teachers' and parents' ratings of the employability skills of 15 students (ages 8-16) with multiple disabilities. Five teachers and 14 sets of parents used the Ohio Employability/Life Skills Assessment, Parent Form to assess student mastery of employability attitudes and skills. Significant differences were found on ratings of relations with supervisors and relations with peers; no significant differences were found on ratings of quality of work, general work habits, task-related skills, quantity of work, relationship to parent, and work attitudes. The study concluded that there is no difference between teacher ratings of students and parent ratings of the same employability characteristic. (JDD)

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Teacher and Parent Assessment of Employability/Life Skills

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Running Head: EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS ASSESSMENT

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine teachers' and parents' ratings of students' employability skills. The study involved five multi-handicapped (MH) special education units within a rural school district. Five female teachers and fourteen sets of parents used the Ohio Employability/Life Skills Assessment, Parent Form to assess student mastery of employability attitudes and skills. A total of 15 students between the ages of eight years and sixteen years participated in the study. (Male = 6, Female = 9) The study concluded there were no significant differences between teacher ratings of students and parent ratings of the same employability characteristic. [$t(14)=-1.72$, $p, .05$]

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P.L. 94-142 mandated that parents and educational professionals work together to establish learning goals for special needs students. Additional legislation required parents and educators to jointly construct Individual Transition Plans (ITP) for special needs students ages sixteen and over. As these team members met to develop Individual Education Programs (I.E.P.) and Individual Transition Plans (I.T.P.), it became increasingly important that members of the team be in agreement about the current levels of performance for each student.

Wehman (1992) states that although parents have always been the driving force behind change in special education, parents are not fully "on board" with transition (the move from the school setting to the world of work) and have difficulty working directly with school personnel to coordinate the education of their child. Wehman believes parents and educators frequently do not see the child "in the same light". He also believes that is not uncommon for parents to see a child as they wish him to be and that teachers are frequently severe in their assessments of student abilities.

Statement of Problem

Based on Wenman's concern that parents are not "fully on board", the purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship of teacher versus parent ratings of students on employability skills. Employability skills for this study were defined as employment related behaviors such as attendance, social and interpersonal skills, attention span, communication skills, personal hygiene, dependability and productivity.

Review of Related Literature

In 1986 the Ohio Council on Vocational Education conducted a survey of 50 Ohio employers. These employers were asked to identify the qualities they looked for in job applicants. This report specifically sets forth the ten skills most sought by Ohio employers. It also lists the most frequently given reasons for firing an employee. According to this survey, the most desirable asset was a positive work attitude. Reading skills were ranked third and basic mathematics were rated fifth. (Appendix, Table 1, Ohio Council on Vocational Education, 1986) This survey promotes the advocacy of employability skills over core academics so frequently requested/demanded by parents.

This employer survey coupled with the legal mandates for I.E.P.s and I.T.P.s necessitates team members (parents and educational professionals) share goals, expectations and levels of performance. (Shelby, 1990) In many cases this sharing of information is difficult. Frequently, information sharing is only done immediately prior to I.E.P./I.T.P. conferences. A study conducted by the Nanaimo School District showed that 25% of parents spoke with the teacher only when the teacher contacted them. Additionally, 12% said they rarely contacted the teacher. (Appendix, Table II, Nanaimo Schools Teacher Contacts) This lack of contact between schools and parents makes it difficult for members of the educational team to share information about the child.

To help bridge this seeming lack of communication between parents and teachers (as it relates to current levels of employability skills) the Ohio Department of Education funded research and implementation of the Employability/Life Skills Assessment. This form was designed to gather information from both parents and teachers as to current levels of performance in the area of employability and life skills.

Assessment of children's behavioral problems involves human judgment. With any type of self-report data, rater reliability is a key issue. Achenbach, McConaughty, and Howell (1987) report that across 269 samples in 119 studies, the mean Pearson r was .60 between raters playing similar roles. (e.g. pairs of parents, pairs of teachers) The report also indicates that the mean Pearson r drops to .28 when raters playing different roles are considered. (e.g. parent with teacher)

Statement of Hypothesis

The literature suggested there may be poor interrater reliability between parents and teachers. This study asked if parents and teachers differ in their assessment of student mastery of employability attitudes and skills. It was hypothesized that there was no difference between the two groups of raters.

Method

Subjects

Parents of the forty one students currently placed in multihandicapped special education units in Sandusky County, Ohio, were asked to participate in the study. Fourteen parents consented to the study. (One set of parents have two children enrolled in MH units, thus accounting for n=15.)

Instrument

Data for the study was obtained through use of the Employability/Life Skills Assessment, Parent Form which was developed by the Ohio Department of Education, Division of Special Education. The assessment asks observers to rate students on eight characteristics of employability/life skills.

Procedures

Each of the forty one students enrolled in Sandusky County multihandicapped special education units received a copy of the Employability/Life Skills Assessment Form. Their parents were asked to complete and return the form. Special education classroom teachers completed identical questionnaires for each student. (Appendix, Table III, Ohio Employability/ Life Skills Form)

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Results

A t test was used to compare the data obtained in the twenty four areas of employability/life skills. Analysis showed that, over-all, there were no statistical differences in the rating severity between parents and teachers [t(14)=-1.72, p<.05].

It should be noted that statistically significant differences were found within the characteristics of relations with supervisors and relations with peers. Although only two of the eight tested employability characteristics were statistically significant, analysis of the data showed that for all characteristics parents rated the child(ren) higher than the teachers.

Discussion

The results of this study support the original belief that there is no difference in student ratings by parents and teachers. (Appendix, Table 4, Data Summary Chart) Although the data is not statistically significant, the results have practical implication in so far as they support the theory that schools need to continue their work in the areas of cooperation, collaboration and communication

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with parents. Since the samples for the study came from small rural schools, and the sample population was less than thirty, the results of this study may not be may generalizable to all parent/teacher rating situations. More studies are needed, in a variety of settings, to determine the true correlational measure of teach/parent rating.

Although the Ohio Employability/Life Skills test has been used thoughout special education units in Ohio for several years, the test results are based solely on observation/self report data and may possibly not represent totally accurate information. In further studies, steps should be taken to provide for both interrater and intrarater reliability.

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Ohio Council on Vocational Education
Survey Summary

Table 1

Qualities Ohio employers look for in job applicants.

1. positive work attutide
2. skills of the job
3. reading
4. people skills
5. basic math
6. speaking
7. appearnace
8. writing
9. personal life skills
10. computer literacy

Most frequently given reasons for firing an employee.

1. excessive absences or late for work
2. poor attitude
3. poor performance
4. cannot get along with others
5. lack of skills
6. not interested in job

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Table II

Teacher Contacts

Which of the following best describes how often you speak with your child's teachers to discuss your child's progress in school?

		BY GENDER		BY ETHNICITY	
	All Respondents	Male	Female	White	Non-white
V138	%	%	%	%	%
Only when teacher contacts me	25	25	24	24	28
I frequently contact teacher	24	24	25	24	26
I occasionally contact teacher	39	38	40	38	40
I rarely contact teacher	12	13	11	14	6
TOTAL	(579)	(277)	(298)	(449)	(124)

		BY AGE				
	All Respondents	18-24	25-34	35-49	50-64	65 and Over
V138	%	%	%	%	%	%
Only when teacher contacts me	25	35	22	23	30	14
I frequently contact teacher	24	15	27	25	33	0
I occasionally contact teacher	39	29	44	40	24	63
I rarely contact teacher	12	21	8	12	13	23
TOTAL	(579)	(85)	(185)	(249)	(53)	(6)

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Table II cont.

Teacher Contacts

BY COMMUNITY SIZE

	All Respondents	More than 1,000,000	100,000 to 1,000,000	25,000 to 99,000	2,500 to 24,999	Less than 2,500
V138	%	%	%	%	%	%
Only when teacher contacts me	25	24	20	21	24	30
I frequently contact teacher	24	28	25	27	23	20
I occasionally contact teacher	39	35	36	40	41	40
I rarely contact teacher	12	13	19	13	12	9
TOTAL	(579)	(41)	(71)	(150)	(148)	(140)

BY MARITAL STATUS

	All Respondents	Married	Widowed	Divorced/ Separated	Single
V138	%	%	%	%	%
Only when teacher contacts me	25	24	19	15	36
I frequently contact teacher	24	26	16	30	15
I occasionally contact teacher	39	40	56	38	30
I rarely contact teacher	12	10	8	16	19
TOTAL	(579)	(413)	(16)	(63)	(86)

Table II cont.

Teacher Contacts

BY EDUCATION

	All Respondents	Eighth Grade or Less	Some High School	High School Graduate	Some College	College Graduate
V138	%	%	%	%	%	%
Only when teacher contacts me	25	37	32	26	27	11
I frequently contact teacher	24	14	31	25	21	26
I occasionally contact teacher	39	40	28	36	39	51
I rarely contact teacher	12	9	10	13	13	13
TOTAL	(579)	(44)	(78)	(257)	(85)	(115)

BY EMPLOYMENT STATUS

	All Respondents	Employed Full-time	Employed Part-time	Retired	Not Employed	Keeping House	In School
V138	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Only when teacher contacts me	25	23	25	58	28	30	16
I frequently contact teacher	24	26	25	16	21	21	22
I occasionally contact teacher	39	36	42	20	40	30	59
I rarely contact teacher	12	14	8	6	10	19	3
TOTAL	(579)	(341)	(46)	(7)	(114)	(28)	(42)

Table II cont.

Teacher Contracts

BY INCOME

	All Respondents	Less than $10,000	$10,000 to $15,000	$15,001 to $20,000	$20,001 to $30,000	$30,001 $40,000
V138	%	%	%	%	%	%
Only when teacher contacts me	25	21	36	23	26	21
I frequently contact teacher	24	27	28	25	24	24
I occasionally contact teacher	39	41	30	36	38	45
I rarely contact teacher	12	10	6	16	12	10
TOTAL	(579)	(72)	(51)	(54)	(147)	(83)

BY REGION OF THE COUNTRY

	All Respondents	North-east	South	North Central
V138	%	%	%	%
Only when teacher contacts me	25	27	17	29
I frequently contact teacher	24	23	29	19
I occasionally contact teacher	39	40	42	41
I rarely contact teacher	12	10	13	11
TOTAL	(579)	(121)	(176)	(168)

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Employability/Life Skills Assessment Parent Form

Ages 6-13 years

developed by
Roberta Weaver
and Joseph R. DeLuca

CHILD'S INFORMATION

Name: _____ Birthdate: _____

RATIONALE

Employability skills are those personal social behaviors and daily living habits that have been identified by employers and young entry-level workers as essential for obtaining employment and for success in the work place. These are life skills that must be taught with the same rigor as basic skills. The development of such skills is a life long process, with performance being relative to a child's ability and age. Parents have the responsibility to teach and expect employability skills from children of all ages.

GENERAL DIRECTIONS

This criterion-referenced checklist may be used yearly, beginning at the age of 6, to assess child's level of performance in the twenty-four critical employability skill areas identified by Ohio's Employability Skills Project. Three descriptors are provided for each skill. **Child performance should be rated using the following scale: 3 = usually, 2 = sometimes, 1 = seldom, 0 = never.**

EXAMPLE (for a 6 year old child)

I. SELF HELP SKILLS

A. Demonstrates personal hygiene and grooming by:

- —meeting parent expectation for cleanliness.
- —meeting parent expectation for good grooming (hair combed, shirt tucked in, etc.).
- —meeting parent expectation for consistent, independent personal hygiene and grooming.

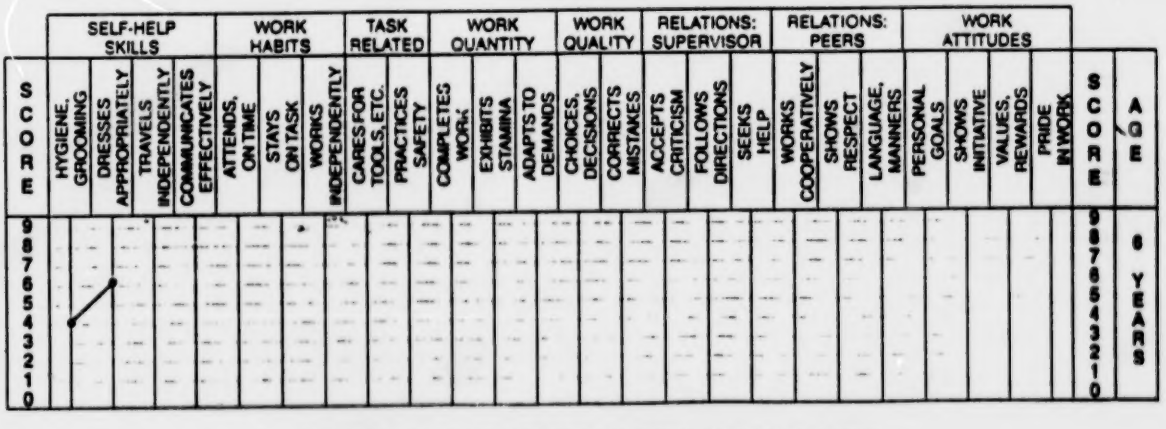
	AGE							
	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
2								
3								
1								
T 6								

B. Dresses appropriately by:

- — choosing and wearing clothes that are appropriate for the weather/ activity/social custom.
- — identifying when clothes should not be worn (dirty, ill fitting, etc.).
- — wearing clothes that are in good condition, clean and pressed with detail given to appearance.

	AGE							
	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
2								
1								
1								
T 4								

Scores for each descriptor are added, providing a value that can be recorded on the Child Profile of Employability Skills. When completed, the profile yields a graphic representation of employability skills performance that will help in planning instruction.



OHIO'S EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS PROJECT

Funded through the Ohio Department of Education, Division of Special Education, with monies provided through Title VI-B (Education of All Handicapped Children Act, P.L. 94-142).
Administered by Miami Valley Special Education Center. Fiscal Agent: Montgomery County Board of Education.

KEY: 3 = USUALLY, 2 = SOMETIMES, 1 = SELDOM, 0 = NEVER

V. QUALITY OF WORK

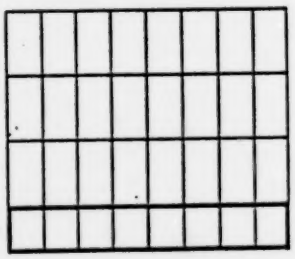
AGE

	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
T								

A. Makes appropriate choices and decisions by:

- choosing an appropriate solution when given options.
- making age-appropriate decisions without parent intervention.
- responding to a problem situation with reasonable alternative solutions.

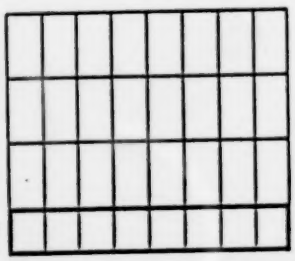
B. Recognizes and corrects mistakes by:



- checking to see if task is correct before considering it complete.
- using self-check methods to evaluate tasks.
- making corrections once an error has been identified.

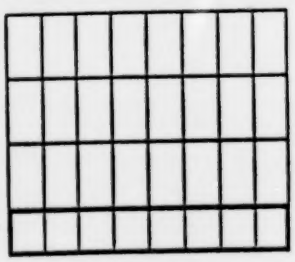
VI. RELATIONSHIP TO PARENT/ ADULT

A. Accepts constructive criticism from parent/adult by:



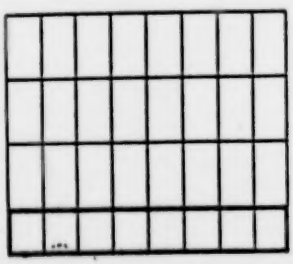
- listening to constructive criticism without making inappropriate gestures or comments.
- making specified changes based on constructive criticism.
- identifying that changes have been made and that performance has improved.

B. Follows directions from parent/ adult by:



- correctly completing tasks following verbal directions.
- correctly completing tasks following written directions.
- communicating and accepting consequences for not following directions.

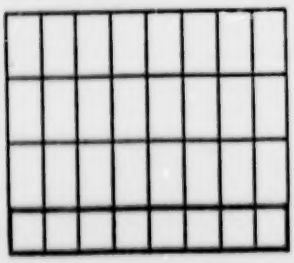
C. Seeks help when needed by:



- identifying when help is needed.
- asking for assistance when help is needed.
- using requested information to remedy the problem.

VII. RELATIONSHIP TO PEERS

A. Cooperates with peers by:



- getting along well with others.
- seeking help from peers.
- directing peers without being overbearing.

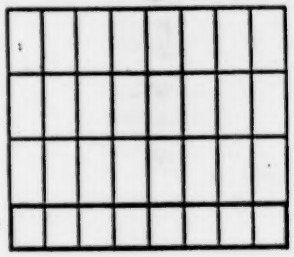
AGE

	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
T								

B. Shows respect for the rights and property of others by:

- taking turns.
- asking permission to use another's property.
- treating borrowed property with respect.

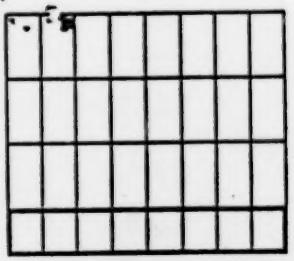
C. Uses appropriate language and manners with peers by:



- using everyday manners (please, thank you).
- avoiding teasing/ridiculing others.
- using language appropriate for a given situation.

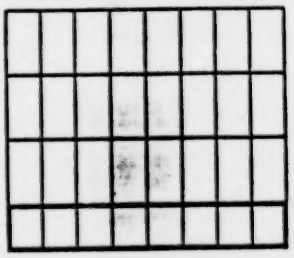
VIII. WORK ATTITUDES

A. Develops and seeks personal goals by:



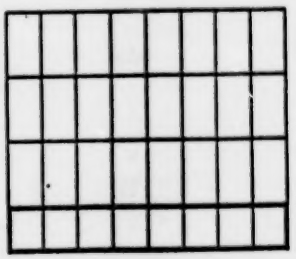
- demonstrating short term personal goals such as completing daily tasks.
- explaining planned activities for after school, weekend, or vacation.
- seeking and developing personal goals that are viable and consistent with ability level.

B. Shows initiative by:



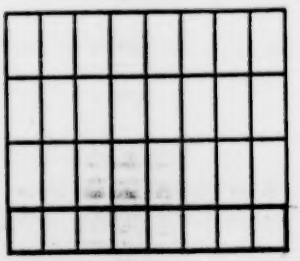
- beginning a task as soon as requested to do so.
- beginning a task without prompting.
- asking for additional work or directions once a task is completed.

C. Accepts societal values and rewards by:



- acknowledging various types of rewards for work well done.
- recognizing when good work has been done.
- responding appropriately when praised for doing a good job.

D. Takes pride in working by:



- sharing accomplishments with others.
- striving for situations requiring improvement and/or expansion in skills.
- contributing to the common good of the family.

KEY: 3 = USUALLY, 2 = SOMETIMES, 1 = SELDOM, 0 = NEVER

I. SELF HELP SKILLS

AGE

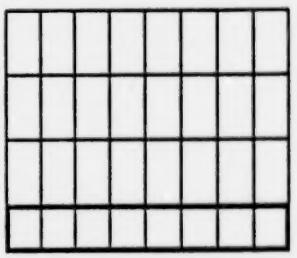
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
T							

A. Demonstrates personal hygiene and grooming by:

- meeting parent expectation for cleanliness.
- meeting parent expectation for good grooming.
- meeting parent expectation for daily independent personal hygiene and grooming.

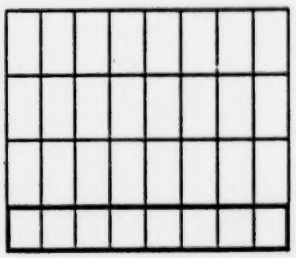
B. Dresses Appropriately by:

- choosing and wearing clothes that are appropriate for the weather/activity/social custom.
- identifying when clothes should not be worn (dirty, ill fitting, etc.).
- wearing clothes that are in good condition, clean and pressed with detail given to appearance.



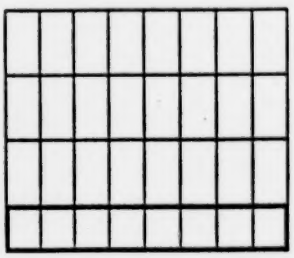
C. Demonstrates mobility skills by:

- walking or riding in the neighborhood, following safety rules.
- getting around the neighborhood and when on outings, public buildings.
- getting around the community.



D. Communicates effectively by:

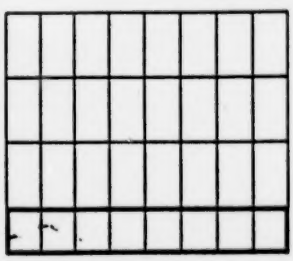
- demonstrating effective listening skills, including eye contact.
- expressing self, answering and asking questions.
- demonstrating expected conversational skills (turn talking, choice of appropriate topic, etc.)



II. GENERAL WORK HABITS

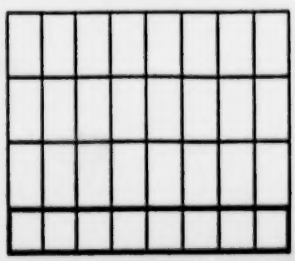
A. Demonstrates awareness of time by:

- being ready for school on time.
- being on time for scheduled family/leisure activities.
- following family rules for reporting when delayed.



B. Stays on task by:

- meeting parent expectations regarding length of time on task.
- completing a task without being distracted.
- returning to task if distracted.



AGE

6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
T							

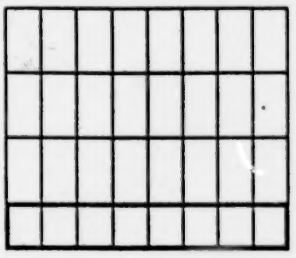
C. Works independently by:

- locating materials.
- beginning work promptly.
- asking family members/peers questions about a given task at the appropriate time.

III. TASK RELATED SKILLS

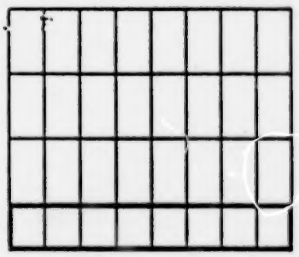
A. Cares for work and living area by:

- meeting expectations for the use of work materials and belongings.
- locating and returning work materials and belongings to the proper storage area.
- maintaining and caring for work and living area.



B. Practices safety rules by:

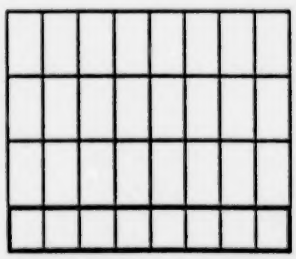
- using proper caution around stove, electricity, water, stairs, etc.
- using tools and materials only for their specified purpose.
- demonstrating correct safety procedures in simulated emergency situations.



IV. QUANTITY OF WORK

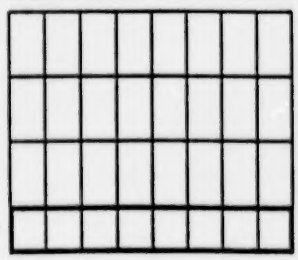
A. Completes tasks on time by:

- completing tasks on time with parent prompts.
- completing tasks on time without parent prompts.
- working at an acceptable speed for a given task.



B. Exhibits stamina by:

- finishing age-appropriate tasks without a break.
- maintaining an acceptable level of speed without tiring.
- completing/learning new tasks without diminishing the level of performance of former tasks.



C. Adapts to increased demands in workload by:

- responding to additional tasks with parent prompts.
- attempting new tasks without demonstrating frustration.
- responding to additional tasks without parent prompts.

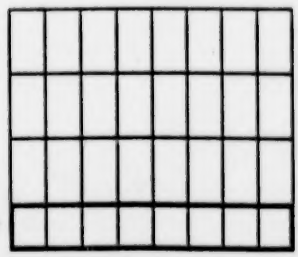


Table 4
Data Summary Sheet

	Mean Scores					
	Teacher	Parent	Male	Female	Corr.	t value
Self Help	6.80	6.97	T 6.0 P 7.0	T 7.3 P 7.1	-.181	-.30
Work Habits	6.89	6.98	T 6.1 P 7.2	T 7.5 P 7.0	.221	-.18
Task	7.37	7.53	T 6.7 P 7.5	T 8.0 P 7.6	.09	-.35
Work Quantity	6.29	6.82	T 5.2 P 7.3	T 7.3 P 6.7	.17	-.94
Work Quality	5.00	6.67	T 3.9 P 7.2	T 6.0 P 6.4	-.28	-2.12
Relations - Supervisors	5.78	7.29	T 4.8 P 7.5	T 6.7 P 7.3	.06	-2.92
Relations - Peers	6.67	7.78	T 6.2 P 7.6	T 7.2 P 8.2	.59	-2.86
Work Attitude	6.58	7.13	T 5.7 P 6.8	T 7.7 P 7.8	.66	-1.53
		Average	T 5.6 P 7.2	T 7.3 P 7.3		

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